

**“One hundred years
from now ...**

it will not matter what my bank account was, how big my house was, or what kind of car I drove. But the world may be a little better, because I was important in the life of a child.”

- Forest Witcraft

Children are our top priority.

With their individual dreams and talents, children have much to give to the world. For now, though, kids rely on us to make sure they can grow safely and become everything they can be. They need adults to make their world a better and safer place.

Every child is part of a family and every family is part of the larger community - our community. It's a community in which each of us has a role to play when it comes to child safety and wellbeing.

Together, we can create a safer future for Washington's children.

If you would like to know more about Kids Come First contact your local Division of Children and Family Services office or visit our website at:
www.wa.gov/dshs/geninfo/kidsfirst.html

**Join Us
In Our Commitment
To Children**

“While DSHS has a major role in making children safe, we cannot do it alone. We will need the concerted efforts of communities and partners throughout the state. I welcome the help of all who will partner with us to put the safety of children first.”

- Dennis Braddock, Secretary



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

**KIDS COME FIRST ACTION AGENDA
Children's Administration**

Working
toward a safer
tomorrow
for all
Washington's
children.



KIDS COME
FIRST

Washington State Department
of Social and Health Services

**Welcome to KIDS COME FIRST ...
a DSHS action agenda to improve
child safety and wellbeing and
to ensure that children come
first in our communities.**

**KIDS COME FIRST
has 4 primary goals:**

1

To make child safety
our first priority!

2

To improve the wellbeing of children
in out-of-home care.

3

To improve the quality
and effectiveness of the
state's child welfare services.

4

To support those community
partnerships that will protect
children, increase their stability,
and help expedite permanency
in children's placements.

Here's what KIDS COME FIRST is doing:

- We're completing a thorough assessment and creating plans to meet the child's specific needs for all children in foster care 30 days or longer through the use of KIDSCREEN.
- We're implementing a new Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Plan that will create new resources and more options for children.
- We're providing comprehensive training for foster care providers through the new PRIDE Training Program.
- We're increasing the involvement of families and other professionals in making decisions affecting children.
- We're seeking accreditation of our 44 offices, through the Council on Accreditation, to ensure statewide quality and effectiveness of our services.
- We're reducing the number of cases assigned to each social worker to provide more time for social workers to work with children and families.
- And, we've developed new tools to assist social workers in making difficult decisions to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. Those tools include:
 - Safety Assessment and Safety Plan
 - A revised Investigative Risk Assessment and Reassessment
 - Reunification Assessment
 - Transition and Safety Plan

Here's what you can do:

- Take time, listen, and pay attention to children. Show you care, ask questions, and encourage them to talk and share their feelings.
- Look for signs that might alert you that a child is experiencing difficulty or may need your help, e.g., untreated illness, excessive hunger, or harsh discipline. Be aware of withdrawn behavior, unexplained fearfulness or aggression, or sudden changes in a child's social activities or school performance.
- Be a good neighbor. Volunteer your time. Do what you can to support families and children who may need some help.
- If you believe a child is being neglected or abused, report it to Child Protective Services by calling 1 (866) ENDHARM.
- Become a foster parent to children who need a safe place to live.
- Support and participate in KIDSCREEN.
- Volunteer your time. Become a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or a Court Appointed Guardian Ad Litem.